



COVID-19 (novel coronavirus): Frequently Asked Questions

Updates are noted in blue.

1. Are we instituting any visitors restrictors?

A. Beginning Monday, March 9, Hackensack Meridian Nursing and Rehabilitation facilities will be instituting the following proactive measures to help protect its residents, patients, families, and team members:

- Conducting temperature checks for all visitors, team members, and vendors upon entry to one of our facilities.
 - Anyone experiencing a fever, cold, or flu-like symptoms will not be allowed entry to our facilities and should delay their visit until they are well. If ill, families will be encouraged to use phone and video calls as a way to check in with their family member.
 - Visitation will be limited to two visitors per patient or resident at a time.
- As always, visitors will be asked to sign-in. Visitors will also be asked a few screening questions following their temperature check and prior to entering the facility.
- Visitation will be limited to immediate family members, significant others, and caregivers only. Children under the age of 12 are asked not to visit. Visitors will be required to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use the facility's hand sanitizer.

Hackensack Meridian *Health* (HMH) will continue to review visitation policies across the network and refine at the COVID-19 develops.

2. Can I use social media to comment about COVID-19?

A. Team members should review HMH's Social Media and Code of Conduct policies as they relate to the current COVID-19 situation. As a reminder, team members may not disclose, whether through written text, pictures, or other means, confidential patient or health information.

3. COVID-19 is in the news around the clock. What should I do if a member of the media contacts me about a suspected COVID-19 patient?

A. Any media inquiries relating to HMH patients should be directed to your site Public Relations Manager.

4. If a team member isn't feeling well and can't get to their physician or an Urgent Care Center, is there another option to seek care?

A. Team members can enroll in Convenient Care NOW which allows a video visit with a board-certified doctor for treatment of non-urgent conditions. This year, for benefit-eligible HMH team members and dependents, Convenient Care NOW consults are FREE with coupon code CARENOW2020. Visit [ConvenientCareNow.com](https://www.hackensackmeridianhealth.org/ConvenientCareNow.com) to register for this service.



5. Where can team members go to learn more about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)?

- A. Team members can get information from the [COVID-19 resource center](#) on The Exchange. You can also email the COVID-19 command center at HMHCommandCenter@hackensackmeridian.org.

6. What is COVID-19? Where did it come from?

- A. On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization gave the 2019 novel coronavirus a new name – COVID-19. The CO stands for corona, the VI for virus and the D for disease. COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. It was first identified in China in December 2019.

Rarely, animal coronaviruses can evolve to infect and spread among humans, causing more serious diseases such as [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome \(SARS\)](#) which emerged in 2002, and [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome \(MERS\)](#) which emerged in 2012.

7. What is the coronavirus?

- A. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses, some cause illness in humans, and others cause illness in animals, such as bats, camels, and civets. There are four common coronavirus strains that cause mild respiratory illnesses (runny nose, muscle aches, sore throat). Coronaviruses are thought to cause up to 30% of common cold cases. COVID-19 is a new strain of the coronavirus that is causing the outbreak currently occurring in China.

8. How does the virus spread?

- A. While it appears the virus originally emerged from an animal source, it is spreading from person-to-person. Transmission is most likely via respiratory droplets. It's not clear how easily COVID-19 spreads from person-to-person.

9. How do you test a person for COVID-19?

- A. As of February 28, the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) can test for COVID-19. NJDOH's test results are presumptive until confirmed by the CDC.

The commercial tests available for respiratory viruses detect the **common** strains of coronavirus which cause the common cold but not COVID-19. These common coronavirus strains usually cause mild disease and **are different** than the novel strain causing the current outbreak. No additional precautions are needed for common coronavirus patients.



10. What are the symptoms and complications that COVID-19 can cause?

- A. Current symptoms reported for patients with COVID-19 include fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Some people may have a mild infection. Others may develop pneumonia and require hospitalization.

It is unknown how long symptoms take to appear, but it appears to be between 2 and 14 days. Better understanding of the infection will emerge with further investigation.

11. How do you screen a person for possible COVID-19 infection?

- A. HMH has added COVID-19 screening questions to the Epic travel screen section of the admission navigator. These questions automatically updated based upon the CDC's criteria.

According to the CDC, clinicians should use their judgment to determine if a patient has signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19 and whether the patient should be tested. Clinicians are strongly encouraged to test for other causes of respiratory illness, including infections such as influenza.

12. How do I handle a suspected COVID-19 case?

- A. If you have a suspected case in the emergency department of your hospital, please take the following steps:
- Place a surgical face mask on the patient.
 - Move patient to negative pressure room or, if unavailable, a private single room with the door closed. Limit room access to only essential team members involved in the patient's care.
 - Initiate airborne and contact precautions. Team members should not double mask, double gown or double glove.
 - Notify Infection Prevention and your local public Health Department. You can find your local health department by [clicking here and using NJ Department of Health's directory](#).

13. How do I handle a suspected COVID-19 case in an outpatient office?

- 1) Place a surgical face mask on the patient.
- 2) Move the patient to a private single room with the door closed. Use a negative pressure room if available.
- 3) Limit personnel access into the room.
- 4) Upon room entry wear a N95 respirator mask. If unavailable use a surgical mask. Team members should not double mask, double gown or double glove.
- 5) Notify the local public Health Department and follow their recommendations. [Click here to access the NJ Department of Health's directory](#).
- 6) If patient is to be transferred, notify the receiving facility.

14. What are the treatments?

- A. There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19 infection. People infected with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms.



15. How can I protect myself?

- A. The same precautions you take to avoid the flu will also help prevent the spread of this new virus. Here are five steps you can take to protect yourself and others from viruses and help stop the spread of germs:
- Maintain personal space, approximately six feet, from people. Instead of shaking hands, do an elbow bump or a friendly wave.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay home when you are sick.
 - Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper arm.
 - Clean your hands. Frequent washing helps protect you and others from germs. Use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs are often spread this way.

For more information about COVID-19, check out Dr. David Perlin's article about [common myths surrounding COVID-19](#).

16. Is it safe to travel internationally?

- A. The CDC has issued travel warnings for China, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, and South Korea.

While the virus was initially confined to China, cases have been reported around the globe. This is why HMH expanded its travel screening for team members. Due to the CDC's updated travel alerts and the uncertainty of this virus, HMH is asking all team members as well as independent and employed physicians who traveled outside of the U.S. to call Occupational Health before reporting to work. You can get a full list of Occupation Health phone numbers by clicking here. [You can get a full list of Occupation Health phone numbers by clicking here.](#)

Effective March 3, 2020, HMH is suspending any international travel for business reasons.

17. What steps is HMH taking to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

- A. HMH has taken several steps to prepare, including:
- Opened a 24/7 Network Command Center.
 - Instituted a daily COVID-19 Steering Committee meeting. *Please email the command center if you have any issues or questions that should be addressed at this meeting. Meetings take place at 12 p.m.*
 - Reviewed and approved surge plans for each facility.
 - Provided daily updates for Safety Huddles from the Infectious Prevention departments.
 - Posted signage regarding COVID-19 at HMH facilities.
 - Implemented screening and Infection Prevention protocols in place at all locations.
 - Implemented screening protocols in Epic.
 - Proactively addressing procurement and management of personal protective equipment (i.e. masks, gowns, gloves, etc.).



18. The COVID-19 situation is giving me anxiety. Where can I get help?

- A. HMH has the WeCare program. WeCare is a confidential resource, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide peer-to-peer support for all team members. Providing a safe zone to express thoughts and reactions, WeCare provides “emotional first aid” to team members who have experienced a stressful event. For confidential WeCare counseling, please call 844-642-2665.

19. How can I order supplies for my location?

- A. Materials and Purchasing is establishing and organizing our COVID-19 needs for HMH, we are asking that all requests for any new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) come through Corporate Purchasing. We need to make sure that as the market narrows with supplies that we are not competing with ourselves. If you have a request, please contact Richard Killeen, Laurie Merris or Lisa Maxted.

Michael Goolsby and the Materials Management team will be handling the storage and distribution of COVID-19 supply needs. We have a large assortment of Personal Protective Equipment currently, and the supply is growing. Please reach out to Mike and or your Site Materials Manager to discuss your needs.

20. Where can I get updated information on COVID-19 and our protocols?

- A. [The Exchange](#) is regularly updated with information. It currently includes information about:
- How to handle a suspected COVID-19 case
 - Tip for using personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - HR COVID-19 policies
 - COVID-19 resources

Leaders will also be receiving daily updates from the network COVID-19 Command Center. You can also email the COVID-19 Command Center at HMHCommandCenter@hackensackmeridian.org. We also have a variety of COVID-19 articles authored by our physician experts on our [HealthU blog](#).